DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 459 146 SP 040 362

AUTHOR Armstrong, Alexandria J.
TITLE Improving Student Teachers' Reflection and Personal Practical Knowledge.
PUB DATE 1999-00-00
NOTE 15p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research (143)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Classroom Techniques; Cooperating Teachers; Elementary Secondary Education; Higher Education; Preservice Teacher Education; *Reflective Teaching; Self Evaluation (Individuals); Student Teacher Attitudes; Student Teachers; *Videotape Recordings
IDENTIFIERS *Reflective Thinking; *Teacher Knowledge

ABSTRACT

This study examined how the use of videotaping could help develop reflection among student teachers, particularly related to classroom management. Three student teachers were videotaped and interviewed several times to determine how they developed their thinking and reflection throughout student teaching and how videotaping assisted this process. The study investigated what student teachers attended to in evaluating themselves on videotape, how they evaluated their classroom management techniques, and whether videotaping helped them improve their classroom management skills or awareness of the situation. Categories that arose during the interviews included idiosyncracies, uncertainty, teaching unique students, best methods to use, doing what the cooperating teacher does, and changing what the cooperating teacher does. Classroom management categories that arose included distractions, changes needed, growth accomplished, gaining attention, use of facilities and resources, and encouraging students to work together. As respondents progressed in their experiences, their comments changed from a focus on personal idiosyncrasies and accomplishing the cooperating teacher's goals to student teacher growth and what worked for specific classrooms. All respondents believed they had achieved growth in teaching and classroom management. The videotaping and discussion process helped participants gain independence, gain the personal practical knowledge of teaching, and enhance their reflection. (SM)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

Running head: Improving Student Teachers' Reflection

Alexandria Armstrong

1

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

Improving Student Teachers' Reflection and Personal Practical Knowledge

Alexandria J. Armstrong

Taylor University

ED 459 146

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

SP040362

Abstract

The focus of this research project was to identify how the use of videotaping can assist reflection in student teachers particularly in regard to classroom management. Three student teachers were videotaped and interviewed in order to determine how student teachers develop their thinking and reflection throughout student teaching and how videotaping can assist this process.

Categories that arose in the interview process included: uncertainty, teaching unique students, best methods to use, doing what the cooperating teacher does, and changing what the cooperating teacher does. Classroom management categories that arose included: distractions, changes needed, growth accomplished, gaining attention, use of facilities and resources, and encouraging students to work together.

The videotaping and discussion process assisted student teachers in gaining independence, gaining the personal practical knowledge of teaching, and enhancing their reflection.

Introduction

Reflective teaching is an important goal of teacher education programs as they prepare teachers for the 21st Century. Being reflective assists preservice teachers in making decisions and learning to think on their feet. One means of assisting student teachers in the reflective process is to use videotaping. Student teachers are faced with realities of their teaching – what they did well and what they need to improve.

One area of research on teachers' knowledge focuses on the personal understandings teachers have of the practical circumstances in which they work. The knowledge student teachers acquire of the personal practical kind can help teachers focus on the practical circumstances under which they work (Carter, 1990). One of the most problematic practical issues in student teaching is classroom management. Student teachers must learn to handle a classroom full of energetic students while communicating their knowledge of content, thinking about what they are saying, what they should say next, and how the students are reacting. What goes on in the minds of the student teachers is very important for teacher educators to be aware of in order to assist the student teacher in becoming a reflective teacher.

Classroom management studies indicate that successful classroom managers must monitor students to maintain classroom activities (Doyle, 1990). Teachers must be aware of what is going on in a classroom and be able to attend to two or more events at the same time. What Kounin (1970) calls "overlapping." What becomes problematic, then, is that preservice teachers are dealing with content, materials, routines, processes, and individual and groups of students, while at the same time learning to monitor students.

The personal meaning that teachers bring to the classroom must be one that is not lost in the research process. Analyzing teachers' thoughts and knowledge must take place in the context of the culture of the particular school, school system, and society in which the teacher lives and works. Teachers' knowledge is primarily 'high-context' which means that their communication is based on the physical context (e.g. the school) or within the person. Researchers' knowledge is 'low-context' meaning that their form of communication is based on information conveyed primarily through an explicit language code (Elbaz, 1991). As a researcher, one has to carefully analyze the theory within the practical context of the situation. Given this premise, this researcher attempted to portray the personal practical knowledge of the preservice teacher without losing the context of the situation.

Research Objectives

The focus of this research project was to identify how the use of videotaping can assist reflection in student teachers. The researcher wanted to identify how student teachers developed their thinking and reflection throughout the student teaching experience. Some guiding questions were: What do student teachers attend to in evaluating themselves on videotape? How do student teachers evaluate their classroom management techniques? Does videotaping assist the student teachers in improving their classroom management skills or awareness of situation?

Method

Three student teachers were selected for this project. Two of the student teachers were in elementary education and one student teacher was in all-grade art education. All

subjects were female and were enrolled in a public midwestern university teacher education program. One student teacher was in the same classroom for 16 weeks, one student teacher was in an elementary classroom for 10 weeks and a kindergarten classroom for 6 weeks, and the art student teacher was in an elementary school for 10 weeks.

The university supervisor videotaped the student teachers and asked the student teachers to view the tape on their own. Then the supervisor interviewed the student teachers on an individual basis in order to identify the thought process of the student teachers and to discuss how the videotaping assisted reflection. Questions were mainly open-ended. During the interview process the student teachers were asked to view the videotape and stop it each time they identified a classroom management situation that they handled well or that they should have done differently. The supervisor and student then discussed the videotape segment. Two of the student teachers were videotaped and interviewed three times (Ann and Cathy). The third student teacher was videotaped and interviewed two times due to time constraints (Laura). The names were changed for anonymity.

The researcher audio taped the interview, transcribed the notes and analyzed the data using qualitative analysis. The transcripts were analyzed according to categories related to each question (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992).

Results

Research results indicated that several categories of teacher awareness and classroom management emerged. The categories will be analyzed according to the

sequence of interviews that took place between researcher (university supervisor) and student teacher.

First interview

During the first interviews of the student teachers, comments included idiosyncrasies such as "...I just sound so different. The way I talked." "I should have stressed my voice more." Other comments focused on uncertainty ("I don't know...I'm unsure...Still haven't figured that out..."). This comment refers to the uncertainty of how to handle a student cheating. Another category was trying to do what the cooperating teacher wants ("She really wants the pages finished."). Students noticed items on the videotape that they hadn't noticed when teaching. Ann said, "...watching the videotape, I can see what things work and I can see how the students react..." Laura said, "I think just viewing a videotape, you see more...more of what the students do than what you do when you're in the classroom." Cathy said, "...I saw all the things I didn't catch when I was teaching, so this tape really helped a lot. I saw the students do a few things that I'm wondering if I should have caught..."

Under classroom management categories, comments included categories about distractions, changes needed, getting attention, individual students and working together.

Examples of students' comments are in table 1.

Second interview

For the second interview, there was less of a focus on idiosyncrasies and a few new categories appeared: growth accomplished, changing what the cooperating teacher does, and changes needed. See table 2.

With regard to idiosyncrasies, Cathy said she was used to her voice on tape. Laura said that she noticed her hand stroking her chin. All of the student teachers noticed growth in this second videotaping. Cathy said, "...I'm becoming more easy with the kids...with teaching, with being organized..." Cathy spoke a great deal about a unique student, a boy who was taken off Ritalin. Both Cathy and Ann noticed students who are special and commented on their behavior and accomplishments.

Again, the category of doing things differently than the cooperating teacher emerged in two of the students' comments. Cathy said that her expectations were different than the cooperating teacher's. She also said she started doing what the cooperating teacher did and then changed it. She referred to having the students read aloud and follow with their fingers. Ann used a classroom management chart differently than her cooperating teacher. At first the children were upset that Ann changed the use of the chart compared to the regular classroom teacher, but they got used to the change.

"Changes needed" was a category also evident in the second interview. Laura said she should have stopped and told a student to quit yelling out answers and for other students to raise their hands. She also said that writing ideas on the board dragged on too long.

Classroom management categories dealt with growth accomplished, organizing the room and desks, gaining attention, and distractions. Cathy said, "...I can tell a big difference in raising their hands. I can tell a big difference in them getting out of their seats...I'm glad that they finally, finally got it in their head. Raise your Hand." Laura said, "Well, I think that discipline is getting a little bit better, you know." She discussed how the seats were arranged differently in order to help students talk less.

Cathy mentioned a table that distracted students: "... they have to touch the table, they have to get under the table, they have to get on top of the table... It gets in the way a lot. Lots of distractions for the kids."

Ann talked about getting attention. She said that she explained what they were going to do so the students wouldn't be surprised and "...I wrote on the board too, and, sometimes when I write things on the board they come in they'll be real quiet 'cause everyone is concentrating on the board." Ann also said, "I think helpers help classroom management too, when you let someone [help]. They all want a chance to help..."

Third interview

Due to time constraints, only two of the student teachers, Cathy and Ann, were interviewed a third time. For the third interview the same categories appeared: growth accomplished, uncertainty, best method, awareness of children. For classroom management, the categories included growth accomplished, utilizing facilities and resources, and specific techniques. See table 3.

Cathy said that she has developed more patience and doesn't raise her voice. Ann said that she has a real struggle because the students need to finish, but were not ready. She also demonstrated uncertainty: "I'm not sure what's going to work for me." Cathy also still showed uncertainty about method ("Should we go to carpet, stay at seats? I'm always thinking about this.").

In relation to classroom management, Cathy said that she has learned to talk softly. Students will listen and pay attention. She wasn't sure how or why she started it. She also noticed growth in students raising their hands. Ann talked to the students about wet tables and to keep their hands off until they were dry. She said it was better to point

this out than to ignore it. She used peer pressure to see which table was ready first. Other specific techniques she used were stopping to get attention or to keep talking (depending on the students). They read words together to keep students' attention. Also she put a boy up front and took away his materials because he distracted others.

Discussion

To summarize, categories that arose in the interview process included idiosyncrasies, items the student teacher didn't notice during teaching that were revealed in the tape; uncertainty, teaching unique students/awareness of children; growth accomplished; best methods to use; and doing what the cooperating teacher does or doing things differently than the cooperating teacher. Classroom management categories included distractions; changes needed; growth accomplished; gaining attention; individual students; use of facilities and resources; specific techniques; and encouraging students to work together.

As the student teachers progressed in their experiences, the comments they made changed from a focus on personal idiosyncrasies and accomplishing the cooperating teachers' goals to comments regarding the growth of the student teacher and focusing on what works for the particular classroom of students. All of the student teachers believed they had achieved growth in teaching and managing the classroom. All of them also indicated that there were still methods and strategies they were unsure of. All of the student teachers said that the videotaping assisted them in identifying classroom management situations that they had not been aware of at the time of teaching. For example, Laura said, "I should've said we need to be raising our hands to give the answers 'cause I have to enforce that a lot and I didn't that time and I should've. I don't

think I noticed it until I watched the tape." Cathy said, "... I saw all the things I didn't catch when I was teaching, so this tape really helped a lot." According to the student teachers, videotaping helped them to apply classroom management strategies throughout their experience.

Conclusions

The implications for teacher education are that videotaping and the interview process can assist student teachers in gaining independence, gaining the personal practical knowledge of teaching, and enhancing their reflection. Teacher educators preparing student teachers for the 21st century need to use the most effective methods to lead the way for future teachers. Videotaping and discussing the videotape can assist student teachers in gaining practical knowledge and reflecting on their experiences.

References

Bogdan, R. & Biklen, S. (1998). Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theory and methods. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Carter, K. (1990). Teachers' knowledge and learning to teach. In W. R. Houston (Ed.), Handbook of research on teacher education (pp. 291-310). New York: Macmillan.

Doyle, W. (1990). Classroom knowledge as a foundation for teaching. Teachers College Record, 91 (3), 347-360.

Elbaz, F. (1991). Research on teacher's knowledge: The evolution of a discourse. Curriculum Studies, 23 (1), 1-19.

Kounin, J. (1970). Discipline and group management in classrooms. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Table 1 Categories for Interview 1

General categories	Idiosyncrasies	Uncertainty	Doing what cooperating teacher wants	More awareness	
Classroom management categories	Distractions	Getting students' attention	Individual students	Working together	Changes needed

Table 2 Categories for Interview 2

General categories	Growth accomplished	Changing what the cooperating teacher does	Best Method	Changes needed
Classroom management categories	Growth accomplished	Organizing the room and desks	Gaining attention	Distractions

Table 3 Categories for Interview 3

General categories	Growth accomplished	Uncertainty	Best Method	Awareness of children
Classroom management categories	Growth accomplished	Utilizing facilities and resources	Specific techniques	